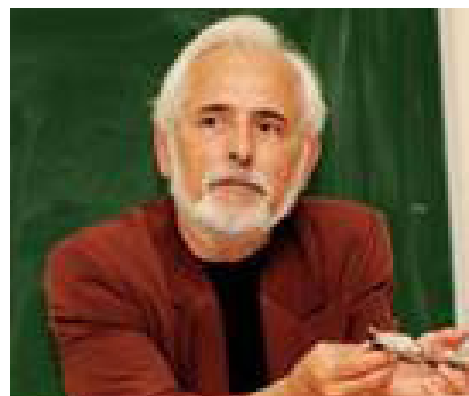


CALL TO FRIENDSHIP: SOME PASSING THOUGHTS AT 70*

Anyone who is to be happy, then, must have excellent friends.

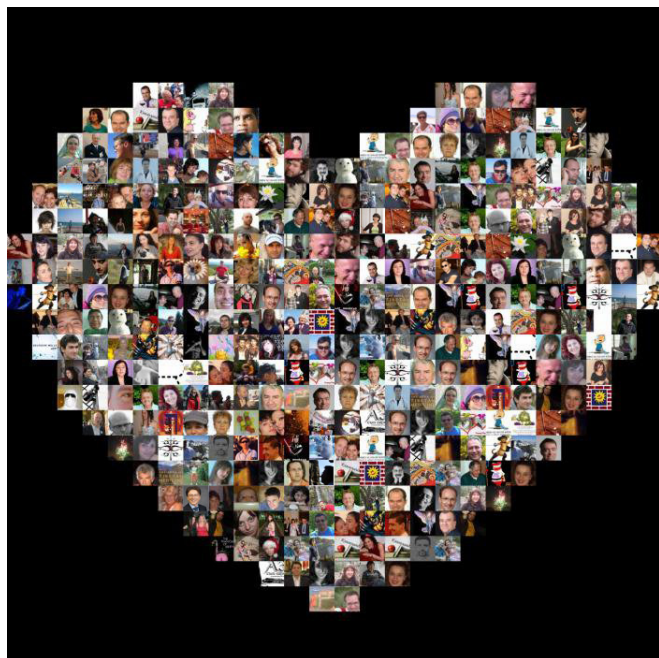
Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170b19



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Dear Colleagues,

During these Christmas holidays, I received a greeting card from Professor Marcia Hiriart of Mexico with a message saying “May our growth factors continue to grow in a collaborative effort between our labs.” Our in-house evaluation reveals that this should be the thought of Brain-and-Heart Friendship (BHF) for the year 2010. This definitely contrasts to the word of year 2009 “to unfriend” as chosen by the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, primarily used by Face Book



Nicomachean Ethics is Aristotle’s *magnum opus* consisted of Book I-X, describing ethics and friendship. According to Aristotle the highest good for humans is *eudaimonia*, a Greek word for well-being or happiness. Aristotle argues that happiness is properly understood as an ongoing and stable dynamics, a way of being in action (*energeia*) specifically appropriate to the human soul (*psyche*) at its excellence (*arête*), beauty (*kallos*), and greatness of soul (*megalopsychia*). Book II Chapter 6 discusses that friendship (*philia*) is a virtue, or involves virtue, which is important for living well. Being a good friend is to be a good person, while enjoying each other’s virtue. Aristotelian philosophy argues that one’s friend is “another oneself” - much later Arthur Rimbaud will express it as *Je est un autre* (in French, “I is another”).

We argue that the Friendship provides a bridge between the virtues of intellect (brain) and those of feeling (heart/ soul), hence BHF. One should be both responsive (outward, decoding signals derived from other people) and responsible (inward, following his/her inner compass). We believe it is *Homo interactomicus*. “If the *society* is composed of separate individual entities called *humans*, what is the “glue”, *nexuses* that bind them together?” – a paraphrase from (1). According to the network theory,

the happiness tends to be correlated in social networks. When a person is happy, nearby friends have a 25 percent higher chance of being happy themselves. Furthermore, people at the “hub” of a social network tend to become happier in the future than those at the periphery. Something like “hub proteins”, which are able to form protein-protein interaction network (see Scaffolding 1 of Continuing Medical Education in this volume of *Biomedical Reviews*, page xx-xx). As well as like in a talk between Mind and Molecule where Mind got his Eureka moment: “He is a molecule precisely because he interacts with other molecules; he is nothing on his own” (2).

Even if we sometimes despair of human nature, we must admit that “one-eat-another” scenario conjured up by the phrase “survival of the fittest” does not bear much resemblance to life as we know it. In the modern evolutionary biology, the metaphor “survival of the nicest” is becoming increasingly appreciated – it up-regulates the cooperation as „natural“ as competition, and altruism as natural as selfishness (3). We need to find the right balance between the two - a story from A (alpha) to Ω (omega), that is, ΑΓΑΠΩ (*agapo*, in Greek meaning “love”).

“In the conditions of spiritual disintegration in which we live, modern man is “in search of a soul”, as Theodore Roszak wrote (4). Accordingly, “Human Philome (Friendome) Project should be launched soon (5,6).

This Foreword is illustrated by a collage called Friendorama, as provided by Dr Vesselka Nikolova, a cardiologist in Varna, Bulgaria.

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* I caught “some passing thoughts at 70” from Denys Wheatley, who is three weeks younger than me (Wheatley DN. Another decade of evidences in research on primary cilia, porosomes and neosis: some passing thoughts at 70. *Cell Biol Int* 2010; 34: 335-337).

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2. Noble D. Prologue. Mind over molecules: activating biological demons. *Ann NY Acad Sci* 2008; 1123: xi-xix.
3. Axelrod, R., Hamilton, W. The evolution of cooperation. *Science* 1981, 211, 1390-1396.
4. Roszak T. Science: a technocratic trap. In: T. Roszak, editor. *Where the Wasteland Ends*. Faber and Faber Ltd, London, UK.1972.
5. Chaldakov G, Chaldakov N. *The Human: Thoughts, Feelings, Friendship*. Essays and Photographs. 2nd edition. Atelie'89 Varna. 2010 (in Bulgarian).
6. Chaldakov G. Philome: the genes of friendship. *LiterNet* 27 October 2010; 10 (131) (in Bulgarian).